

conscientious objector. But the rights of children who have no means of protecting themselves must be guarded, and there can be no doubt that the decision of the six judges will be approved by all reasonable people.

"PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS."

THE Editor of *Truth* has been criticising adversely the nursing arrangements at the Weymouth Port Hospital, and has in consequence received a long letter from the Town Clerk of that town, Sir Richard N. Howard. *Truth* alleges that the Port Hospital of Weymouth contains a small-pox, a scarlet fever, and a typhoid ward, that the only medical attendance available is rendered by the parish doctor; that there is no certificated nurse in the establishment, the whole of the duties of nursing the sick, cooking, washing, &c., being performed by a caretaker and his wife. There is no suggestion that these people are not excellent of their kind, but simply that they are not certificated nurses, and that they are therefore not qualified to undertake the whole work of nursing, together with cooking, housework, and general attendance on the patients, in a public hospital for men, women, and children, and one to which private paying patients are admitted.

Sir Richard Howard asserts that the caretaker served on various ships in the capacity of Sick Berth Steward, and also in the Royal Naval Barracks, Sheerness, the Naval Hospitals at Chatham and Devonport; and that his wife was an assistant nurse at the Fever Cottage Hospital for Cadets at Dartmouth.

We think our readers will agree with our contemporary that this experience does not qualify this couple, of whose worthiness there is no question, to undertake the entire nursing of five wards in a municipal hospital for infectious diseases in a large town. There is no question that a hospital maintained by the rates should be officered by persons who have received a thorough professional training qualifying them to discharge their responsible duties, and moreover that a sufficient number of nurses should be employed to attend upon the patients night and day. The Town Council of Weymouth would do well to demonstrate that this is the case, instead of seeking to justify their action, in placing in charge of critical cases, persons possessed only of the qualifications which have been enumerated.

Until it adopts this course the public, and the medical and nursing professions, will without doubt consider that the remarks of our contemporary are amply justified.

AN OPEN DOOR.

A QUESTION of great importance to the public was dealt with by Mr. A. Braxton Hicks at the Coroner's Court, Battersea, on Monday last, at the adjourned inquest into the death of Ernest McKenzie, a child of seventeen weeks old.

On Friday last week, when the inquest was opened, Dr. James Jerome Mackay gave evidence that he had made a very careful post-mortem examination, and that death was due to convulsions following brain mischief. The lungs, except for a little congestion, were perfectly normal, but the brain was exceedingly enlarged and congested.

The divisional surgeon Dr. Felix Kempster stated that since the adjournment he had made a post-mortem examination of the deceased. Five other medical men were present. From the very superficial examination which had been previously made it was impossible to say whether the brain was congested or not. None of the organs of the chest had been examined at all. Death was not due to convulsions, but to gradual asphyxia following double pneumonia and pleurisy. No post-mortem, in the proper sense of the term had been made. This statement was endorsed by Dr. Leonard McManus.

Dr. Mackay contended that his evidence was absolutely correct, and that it was only a question between two medical men.

The jury returned a verdict in accordance with Dr. Kempster's evidence, and the Coroner said that this was the most serious case with which he had had to deal since he had held office. If the evidence of a medical man could not be relied upon, coroner's inquests were useless. Dr. Mackay's conduct was disgraceful, not only to himself, but to the rest of the medical profession to which he had the honour to belong. He did not intend to put up with it and ordered Dr. Mackay to be arrested and he was conveyed to the Battersea Police Station where he was charged with committing wilful and corrupt perjury.

It is obvious that the offence is of the very gravest nature. If the sworn statement of a medical man with regard to a post-mortem cannot be relied upon there is an open door for every sort of crime, and the life of an innocent man might be easily sworn away.

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